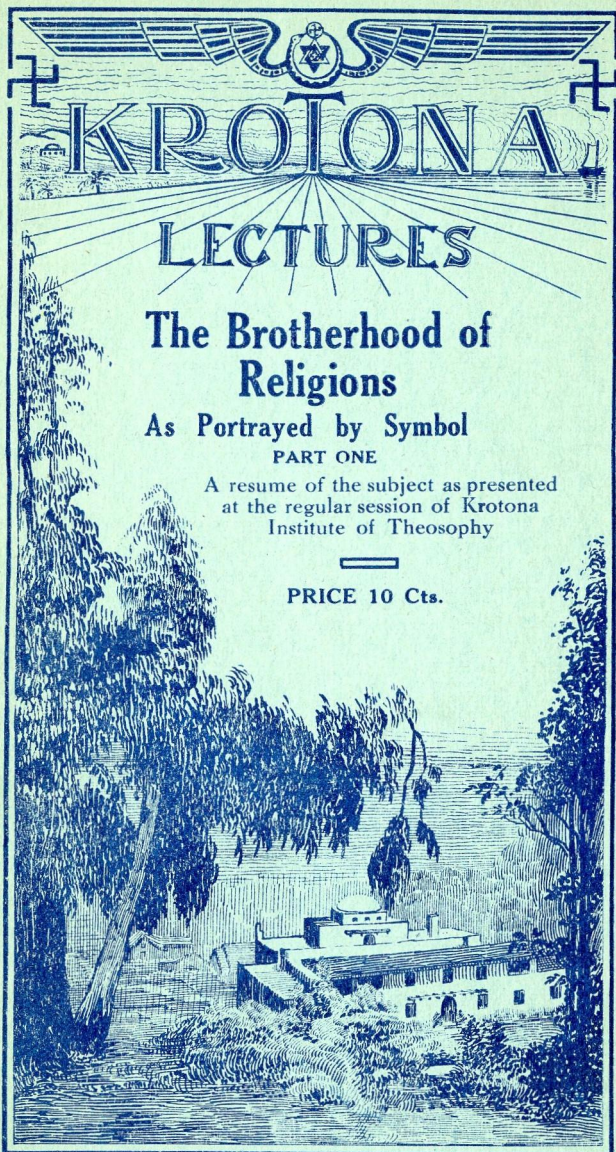




THE BROTHERHOOD OF RELIGIONS

As Portrayed by Symbol

by

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INTRODUCTION

All ancient symbols have a deep and philosophical meaning, and a knowledge of symbolism is necessary in order to interpret scripture correctly.

A symbol has been defined as a pictorial representation of some truths which it is desired to make intelligible to those who learn more easily by the presentation of a picture than they do either by verbal explanation or by spiritual insight.

Every religion, while employing many symbols, has a particular one which summarizes the central doctrine or principle that religion is designed to develop.

Standing as we are at the threshold of a new era, one of Brotherhood and co-operation, it becomes necessary for us to look for those qualities in the religions of the world as well as in the social and political life, and to endeavour to ascertain the points which the religions have in common instead of looking for their differences as we have done heretofore.

One thing comes out clearly in studying the history of the religions of the world and that is, that God has a plan for the building of His humanity. That His life is planted like a seed within the hearts of every one of His human children and by the evolution of that spiritual germ in an orderly progression, stage after stage is accomplished; quality after quality brought out. The "Sons of Men" are to become the "Sons of God."

Truly, there is but *one* religion;—the story of the unfoldment of the Divine Life. As humanity progresses and becomes ready to express more of the divine spiritual consciousness, the Guardians of the race—the Teachers of religion—present a fresh facet of that One Truth. As James Russell Lowell so well expresses it:

"God sends His teachers unto every age,
To every clime, and every race of men,
With revelations fitted to their growth
And shape of mind, nor gives the realm of truth.
Into the selfish rule of one sole race."

Thus a different type of civilization is gradually

moulded and shaped through the new presentment of another facet of this truth, and this facet is expressed by a symbol.

The essence of religion is the aspiration of the heart for that God within, which is called by the Christian, "the Mystic Christ." He, who St. Paul tells his converts, "must be born in them," and is their "hope of glory." It is the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" for by the divine outpouring of Life into matter, that Life becomes "cribbed, cabined and confined," and only after long ages of experiences can manifest in the world as the true Emmanuel, "God with us."

Each religion expresses this immersion into, and rising from the bonds of matter in a different way, each has its own terms, phraseology, and personifications.

The language of symbols is however, common to all of them.

One of those used generally is the Lotus or Lily. It is the flower sacred to Nature and represents the productive powers of both the spiritual and physical realms. In pictures of the Annunciation, the angel Gabriel appears to the Virgin Mary with a spray of white lilies in his hand. This spray, typifies fire (spirit) and water (matter) and has precisely the same significance as the Lotus in the hands of Asita when he announces to Gautama's mother the birth of the Buddha.

Fire, Light, the Sun, all stand for the Spirit. The male, generative side of life, Force, Consciousness, the Father of the Christian and—The Water, Deep, the Sea, Chaos, the Moon, the Darkness, the Grave, stand for the Female side, the Nourisher, the Builder, the Negative side of Nature—Matter, the great Mother of all Life.

This Mother is frequently referred to as Virgin, Immaculate, the Queen of Heaven, because at the commencement of each Solar System, the matter is impregnated with life for the first time and in the fulness of time, the divine Mother Mary (from the Latin Mare, meaning the sea or deep,) (In French the idea may be seen in "le mer" the sea, "la mere" the mother,) will bring forth the "child" a perfected humanity, of whom we have had examples in the man Christ Jesus,

(he who was *anointed* by the chrism of the Spirit) and Gautama, the Buddha, (he who was *enlightened* by the Spirit.)

The mother of the Buddha is Maya, which means illusion. The mother of Horus of Egypt is Isis, who is represented as veiled from head to foot. Both are described as Virgin mothers and their names carry with them the idea of the immersion of spirit in matter.

All scriptures enshrine the story of the evolution of the soul, and their story is oftentimes illustrated by incidents in the life of some exalted personage.

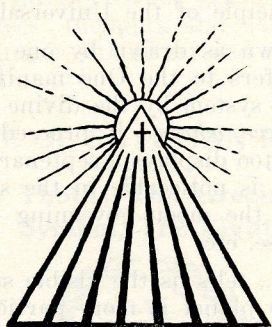
What is essential in a religion is that it forms an open road to God. That road must necessarily vary according to the needs of humanity.

There are special beauties to be found in each religion, and there are also striking similarities in them all that should be recognized by the searchers after truth. As we recognize these distinctive beauties and these similarities and learn that the same fundamental truths are taught under all forms of word or symbol, we should obtain that broad mental and spiritual grasp which understands that God welcomes men by whatsoever path they come to Him, since "the way men take from every side is mine."*

* Bhagavad Gita.

OUTLINE OF HINDUISM

Founder, Vyasa; Symbol, The Sun.



THE SPIRITUAL SUN AND ITS MEANING

The Concealed Spiritual Sun, the Omnipresent Self gives birth to the whole Kosmos. The Heart and Matrix of all living and existing forces in our Solar system in particular and to all Solar systems in general.

The central visible Sun of our system is the outer garment of this Spiritual Sun. Matter is eternal, like a film from a Divine Breath, it makes objective the Divine ideas.

That it is a Sun that will enlighten the inner nature of man is implied in the modern daily prayer of the Hindu. "That Sun we worship; may the divine radiance make us *Wise*, may it brighten our *Thought*."

In ancient symbolism it was always the Sun, spiritual, not the visible, that sent forth the divine Incarnations or Saviors of the world.

Both the Spiritual and visible Sun are the fount, supporters and vivifiers of life, through all and beyond all, throbbing, pulsating in all beings. The inspiration of

the spiritual, intellectual, and emotional life, as the visible sun is the radiator of the physical life.

The Symbol

This sun is depicted in several ways:—as drawn by seven horses. This means that the spiritual Sun is seven-fold in its essence or principles. These are graduated into 7 degrees of density, the visible Sun being the lowest state or principle of the Universal Divine Life.

It is also shown as drawn by one horse with seven heads:—This refers to the One manifested divine life poured into His system by the divine author of its being, as the source *whence* it proceeded is potentially seven fold, so it too displays a septenary nature in manifestation. This is noticeable in the spectrum, musical scale, phases of the moon governing our time system, periods of disease, etc.

Also, H. B. P., tells us the visible sun “being a central star and no planet is more particularly related to seven of the planets subject to him in his system than to the others.”

Pictured with a face in the Sun, implies the male or positive aspect of force in activity.

Immanence of God

The outcome of meditation on this symbol is a magnificent expression of the common Fatherhood of God and its corollary the brotherhood of man. The Hindu religion is the finest exponent of the duty of one fragment of this all-pervading divine life to another. Each portion has its place in the great scheme, all are brothers at different stages of unfoldment, for the nature of God is the nature of man, and if a man does not recognize this, it is because an illusion wraps him round, and if he will but throw aside this veil of illusion a man will attain to absolute perfect Divinity.

Contemplation of these divine powers latent in man has developed in the Hindu a depth of understanding and capacity for abstract thought that has never been surpassed.

An All-Pervading Religion

This symbol of the Sun being such an all embracing one, has shaped a religion which touches human life at all points more than any other, with the exception of the Hebrew. It deals with right conduct, socially and politically, and gives full directions for a healthy, sanitary mode of living. It permeates and inspires the whole life from infancy to the grave, it is at the basis of all its devotees' thoughts and actions, and guides their emotions, inspires their art and moulds their great philosophies.

OUTLINE OF EGYPTIAN RELIGION

Founder, Thoth; The Grecian Hermes
Symbol, The Light



THE LIGHT AND ITS MEANING

Darkness or Chaos is said to be the condition of the Universe during the period of rest or non-being which preceeds a period of manifestation or being.

Darkness is the basis and root of light, (spirit) which is that which renders darkness visible.

This Light which proceeded from the Absolute or Darkness illuminates both the inner and the outer worlds and the inner and the outer nature of man.

It is the first ray from Ra or Osiris, the Sun, it is the energizing light by which everything is created. It is also the Light and Life-giver of the spiritual and psychic realms. The Light on this physical plane is but the reflected radiance of the divine light.

It is hidden in all existence, even in the mineral, vegetable and animal forms, and is to be sought for with much diligence, using the Light within to find the Light without.

Horus, Isis and Osiris

Osiris, the divine Spirit, born of Light was slain by his twin brother Set, Darkness. Osiris, and Isis the Virgin-mother, give birth to Horus.

Two are the births of Horus, He is born of Isis, the God born into humanity, taking flesh of the Mother, Eternal Matter. He is born again into Osiris, redeeming His mother from her long search for the fragments of her husband scattered over the earth. "He is born into Osiris, when Osiris in the heart, sees Osiris in the heavens, and knows that the twain are one."

Initiation

Those in whom this spiritual light was unfolded were called "Sons of Light." The King, who was an Initiate, was called Pharaoh, the House of Light, and he was told his one great duty was to "Look for the Light" for only as the king sees the divine Light in his people can he be called a king by the grace of God. The priests were taught to "Follow the Light" and the people to "Seek the Light." Everywhere in ancient Egypt this Light was the God-light in the heart of man which enabled him to realize the divinity in all around him.

The text in the Christian scriptures, "The Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world" is taken from the sayings of Thoth.

The Result

By means of this search for the hidden Light, Egypt acquired that Wisdom and Knowledge for which she is famed. Science, Specialization were the keynotes.

The Egyptians knew the length of the year and the

form of the earth, could calculate the eclipses of the sun and moon. They were partially acquainted with geometry, music, chemistry, medicine, anatomy, architecture, agriculture and mining. The magnificence of their masonry is unsurpassed and many so-called modern inventions were known to them.

Their Records

“No Egyptian” says Herodotus, “omits taking accurate note of extraordinary and striking events.” Every event in life is recorded in picture and writing, so thoroughly did they search for the Light in the dark recesses of Nature.

What Religion Meant to Them

Religion was to the Egyptian a matter of daily and hourly consideration. Full of symbology, it yet taught that right actions must be the outcome of religious knowledge. It is recorded of a man that he based his claim to a happy hereafter on the facts that “he had loved God, given bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, garments to the naked and shelter to the stranger.” exactly what is declared necessary by the Christ for the inheritance of the kingdom.

Veneration of Animals

That they regarded some animals as sacred has been a source of astonishment to students of Egyptology, but to the Egyptian, God was too great, too Holy, too mysterious to be worshipped under the similitude of a man, so they selected certain animals for veneration that displayed particular qualities that would convey an idea they wished expressed.

The Cat

For instance was sacred to the Moon, who represented Isis, the female, negative side of nature, matter.

The cat curls itself into a ball when asleep, is very magnetic, it sees in the dark, her eyes become rounder and more luminous at night.

The Cow

Is the symbol of Creative Nature; the Bull symbolizes the spirit which vivifies her, the Holy Spirit. The horns

of the cow were supposed to represent a boat, typifying the vehicle or form into which spirit is poured and by which it is carried. We get the same idea in the "Holy Grail" of the Christian legends.

The Scarabeus

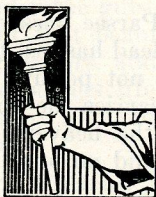
Was considered particularly sacred by the Egyptians. In some of the papyri it is called "Khopri" from the verb Khopron "to become" and it has thus been made a symbol of human life and of the successive *becomings* of man throughout the various incarnations of the soul.

When the wings of the insect are closed the form of the Tau or Egyptian cross is plainly seen. The tau indicated the divine life working in matter.

The scarab lays its eggs in dung and with its hind legs rolls that into a ball which encloses them. This symbolized the dropping of the divine life into the primordial matter of space and its gradual development therein. The visible coming forth or emerging from the invisible. The mundane egg was said in many religions to have been placed in the "Waters of Space" and like all eggs only needed heat to enable it gradually to evolve into a living creature, appearing to the outward senses a self-created being. In Christian countries the Egg is connected with Easter, the festival of resurrection, re-becoming, life eternal.

OUTLINE OF ZOROASTERISM

Founder, Zarathustra; Symbol, Fire



THE SYMBOL AND ITS SIGNIFICATION

To the votaries of this religion, Fire was a mystic divine element, symbol of the Spirit that is at once the Creator, Purifier and destroyer or changer.

Fire consumes all dross but is never itself consumed. It is in all things and can be released from all things.

Fire and water are the great purifiers, and must never be polluted, but even water, (matter) is purified by Fire. Out of these two, called the Twins, all things come, and in all things is the hidden presence of fire, even in the heart of man. This fire is embodied in the Sun in the heavens. The Angels are flaming spirits, it was heat and light, health and strength and by it all had life and motion. It is the most active, helpful, subtle and powerful of the four elements. All glory is revealed as fire, it blazes out from that which is dark from excess of light.

The Keynote—Purity

This religion was an eminently practical one. Purity was the keynote of all man's relationships to life. The law of Zarathustra was based on the eternal distinction between right and wrong. The supreme good consisted in truth, duty, right, an eternal battle for good against evil. Man was to throw himself on the side of the pure, fight for the pure, maintain and help the pure.

The civilization was an agricultural one, for the earth is the shadow of God the Fire and so must be kept pure. All husbandry was to be performed as a service to God. The air must be kept pure. The rivers and lakes must not be defiled as water is a pure element.

Burial Customs

The Zoroastrian or Parsee does not burn or bury his dead, as that which is dead has lost the Fire and is therefore unclean and may not pollute the sacred elements, instead he reverently carries the body to the Towers of Silence open only to the heavens, where the vultures may swiftly devour it and no pure element will thereby be soiled.

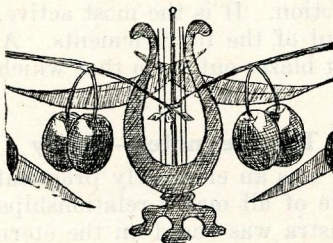
Living the Life

Pure thoughts, pure words, and pure deeds is the rule of the Zoroastrian life.

There are very few Parsees remaining, a few in Persia and some in India. They are the most active, industrious and wealthy class of merchants in Bombay. Lavish, not parsimonious, always ready to help one another. Rarely is a Parsee brought to court on either criminal or civil charges and it is no empty boast that they have not a single prostitute amongst them.

OUTLINE OF THE ORPHIC RELIGION

Founder, Orpheus; Symbol, The Lyre



THE KEYNOTE, BEAUTY

The passage of souls through the civilizations which were the products of the Hindu, Egyptian and Zoro-

astrian faiths developed the power of abstract thinking and also gave stimulus to practical life. It remained for the next religion in point of time to stimulate and cultivate the emotional nature.

The same great truth that the One Life, the One Love is above all through all, and in all, was once more given to men; this time under the guise of the Beautiful. Music was the symbol of that beauty. Harmony of every power with all other powers, and all forms of life with all other forms. The perfect life is a life that breathes out music and harmony, joy, brightness, rhythm, poise and therefore beauty.

How Orpheus Taught

The Teacher Orpheus dwelt mostly in the glades and woodlands of Greece, shunning the crowded cities and haunts of men gathered together.

In these sequestered spots He gathered round Him a group of disciples, whom He taught by song and music, accompanying Himself on a five-stringed lyre; singing wonderful melodies with His marvelous voice. He used a pentatonic scale. All nature and the Angels bowed to His music and were glad because of His Coming.

What He Taught

Orpheus wandered through the land weaving a network of Beauty as He passed, He taught that Sound, Motion, Vibration were in all things and if man would harmonize himself and his life with them, the divine harmony would play through them, making a song and joy of life.

The Result

Very wonderful has been the outcome of this teaching:

From the Keltic or Latin peoples we get models in poetry, drama, rhetoric, politics, philosophy, sculpture, architecture and painting.

The Keltic temperament was developed to a high pitch of sensitiveness to thought, emotion and the beauties and variety of natural objects. It always expresses itself in perfection and grace of form, for had not the Founder taught them to endeavour to express in all they

and the harmony and beauty of the God nature that holds forms together and is the inspiration and energy of all the powers latent in man. This religion particularly emphasizes the Immanent aspect of God.

Later Developments

After the passing of the Founder, and His disciples, the teaching they had given gradually crystalized into a religious form.

The forces and powers of God working through nature were personified into Gods, Goddesses, and demi-gods; full of life, love, beauty and radiant with joy, a religion entirely without austerity, asceticism or terror.

Two forces acting as a unit were spoken of as married, and the new force which was the outcome of that union, was their child.

All the phenomena of nature, the powers of the human soul, the conflicts of right and wrong are vividly portrayed in the beautiful Greek mythology.

What the Gods Meant to Them

The Greeks felt their gods were ever near them, living in their mountains, woods and groves, disporting themselves in their streams, rivers and lakes. They looked on them as nobler, wiser, stronger and brighter Greeks.

Heraclitus says, "Men are mortal gods and the Gods immortal men."

Three Grades of Divinity

The Gods were divided into three groups. Group 1 dealt with the generation of the Universe, one God springing from another as the Life immersed itself more and more deeply in matter. Very beautiful and poetical is the dramatization of the descent of the life forces.

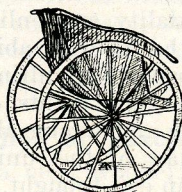
Group II represents the threefold nature of God and man.

Group III dealt with the elemental spirits and their rulers and directors.

Religion was a very real and joyous thing to the Greeks for they felt that it stimulated, unfolded and developed every human tendency and the faculties of soul and body in symmetrical proportion.

OUTLINE OF BUDDHISM

**Founder, Gautama, The Buddha;
Symbol, The Wheel**



The Meaning of the Symbol

The Wheel has many significations:

It stands for the boundary set for creation in the phenomenal world. Also for centres of force which have an ever increasing tendency to a circular movement. H. P. B., says, "Eternal vibration in the unmanifested changes to vortical motion in the manifested."

In the Bible the latter idea is conveyed by the symbol of the whirlwind, "The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind," etc.

The wheel also stands for the chakrams or centres of forces in man.

The turn of the wheel signifies the awakening of a new era whether in a universe, globe or life of man.

The Buddhist wheel is often represented with the spokes forming a cross. This is a cross on which all human passions have to be crucified before the Spirit or Life passes through the "Straight Gate" or narrow circle that widens into an infinite one when the *Inner* man has passed the threshold.

KEYNOTE, SPIRITUAL LAW

The fundamental note of Buddhism is that of spiritual law, just as in the phenomenal world all manifestation is under the realm of law and order, so is the in-

ner or spiritual life governed by law and by recognition and conformity with these spiritual laws man can work out his own salvation just as a scientist can perform phenomena by conquering and making use of natural laws. Man has only to realize that within him lies the potentiality of Buddhahood, (enlightenment,) and then set himself to work to attain the complete unfolding of that potentiality and enlightenment must follow. Man has also the inherent ability to classify every effect and trace it back to its ultimate cause in perfect sequence. The great law points out unalterably that right is always right and wrong always wrong and absolute justice is a law of the universe. "If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain, follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage." "If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him." "One's deeds are not lost; they will surely come back to you, their master will meet with them." "As sound belongs to the drum, and shadow to the substance, so in the end misery will certainly overtake the evil-doer." "He who has done even a little good finds in this world and in the other happiness and great profit; it is like a seed that has well taken root." The Buddha declared that the great law does not cease with man, all nature above and below him come under its working.

Non-Attachment

The secret of the Buddha, the way to escape from the necessity of re-birth into the lower worlds, to attain liberation, or as the Christian calls it, salvation, was by the extinction of desire. It is desire that separates man from the essential, the real, the everlasting, the spiritual and binds him by threads of attachment to the things of form, the unreal, the transient, the perishable. Desire is at the root of all sorrow and suffering, it is the desire for sentient life that brings us back to the lower worlds, and in them we get suffering, decay, death, separation from those we love, hatred of those who prevent us from getting what we wish. By the cessation of all desire, the abandoning of all passion, deliverance will be achieved and Nirvana reached.

Creeds, rituals, priests, all have their part in the great scheme, but the man who "ceases to do evil, learns to do well, cleansing his heart" will ultimately reach the goal of Nirvana.

Nirvana

Has been defined as "A condition of peace and blessedness so high above our present state that it is impossible for us to understand it. Another definition is "Peace in Omniscience," the peace that "passeth all understanding."

Method of Teaching

The Buddha had a most wonderful system of teaching, while He illustrated His words constantly with parable and story, He also tabulated His teaching in a marvelous manner, arranging everything under certain headings which could be easily memorized. It is so simple in its broad outline that a child can remember and understand the four noble truths, the noble 8-fold path, and the principles of life which they suggest; yet it is carried out so elaborately that it constitutes a philosophy which will help the wisest man in his study of the problems of life during the whole course of his existence.

He analyzed everything to an almost incredible extent as may be seen by His numeration of the steps which intervene between thought and action.

Each of the four noble truths is represented by a single word, and yet to anyone who has ever heard the exposition of the system each of those words calls up a great range of ideas. The same may be said of the 8-fold path, the ten perfections, the twelve Nidanas.

The Lord's Mission

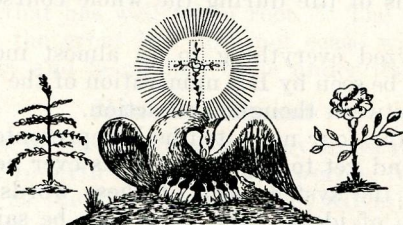
The Buddha came as a reformer of Hinduism, a religion already of great antiquity into which many errors and an iron rigidity had already crept. His teachings are more practical, appeal more to the reason and render more intelligible the basis on which morals are built up than do those of Hinduism. It was intended to spread beyond India to peoples less metaphysical and to develop those whose power of abstract thought was less

keen. It was the first missionary religion and has the greatest number of adherents of any religion in the world, and is to them a living, uplifting spiritual force.

The Buddhist Attitude

The Buddhist recognizes in the Lord Buddha the divine Self freed from the limitations of ignorance, the final achievement of perfection after a long series of lives spent in the mastering of matter and the service of mankind. They do not claim that the Buddha is unique, there have been, and will be many Buddhas. Each of Them is an example of what a human being may become, indeed all must in some period, near or distant, attain emancipation, "Look within, thou art Buddha." "Become what thou art" says St. Anslem. The utter certainty of final redemption for all mankind gives to the followers of the Buddha a touch of joy and serenity that is found to the same extent in no other faith.

ROMAN RELIGION, SYMBOL, THE EAGLE



KEYNOTE, MUNDANE LAW

It is an interesting fact that while the "Wheel of the Spiritual Law was set rolling" in the East by the Buddha, the western world was developing under a religion whose keynote was material and state law, and so founded the basis of the form side which is to make the splendid vehicle for the spiritual life whose fount is in the East, when the "twain shall meet" as they are destined to do in the near future.

Celestial Hierarchy

The Romans believed in the spiritual being of everything apart from its material manifestation. To them there were no gaps in nature; numberless groups of entities existed, ensouling forms from God down to man and from man up to God.

The hearth, farms, streets, especially at the cross-roads, lands, woods, fields, streams, lakes, rivers, mountains, seas, and skies were the habitat of life of varying degrees of unfoldment.

The major Gods, higher beings than men, were those that served the community as a whole, the State being regarded as a family. Jupiter, or Zeus-pater, thus was the Father of the State with Juno, matter, as Mother.

Method of Instruction

The people were instructed by means of a number of short stories, easy to retain in their minds. The inner explanation of these was given at the "Mysteries" which all seriously minded people joined. The real meaning of these stories gave the whole thing quite another aspect.

For example: The child Bacchus, (the creative word or Logos) was said to have been playing with toys when he was seized by Titans and torn in pieces. Later on, he was put together again. This signifies, the divine life becoming split up by its immersion into matter and re-becoming the One through suffering and sacrifice.

The toys of Bacchus are four.

I. A set of five dice representing the 5 platonic solids, the tetrahedron, the cube, the octahedron, the dodecahedron, and the icosahedron. Each one of these figures indicates the lines of force along which the Logos worked in the building of the five planes of nature of which His Solar System is composed.

II. Is a top representing the whirling physical atom.

III. Is a ball representing the earth.

IV. Is a mirror. This signifies the reflection of the divine ideas into matter.

ROMAN RELIGION

Symbols

The Eagle is the bird of the Sun, its eyes can behold the light. It is the type of strength and freedom and of the wind on whose wings the Spirit rides. To be a citizen of Rome was to be assured of protection and justice wherever you went.

Every home was a temple and its head, the family priest. The house snake (wisdom) was his symbol, crested for a male, plain for a female. The Lares of the home were depicted as two youths, (the Christ within,) pouring wine (spirit) into a pitcher (material manifestation.)

Their movement is that of dance, rhythm, sometimes too the pipe-player is added, for the play of the spirit is always musical. The Romans therefore made music an essential part of their religious ritual.

The serpent, or serpents are shown as partaking of things offered, significantly of eggs or pine-cones. These are glyphs of the source of all, the circumscribing of the One life in order that many may come into existence.

This is represented in miniature by the egg, the process of evolution in both cases is due to heat and moisture under the influence of the unseen creative spirit. That that spirit is wisdom is shown by the serpent. "The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath He established the heavens." Regarding the divine life as immanent in all beings, it was easy for the Romans to be tolerant of all forms of religious thought and so we find them adding a statue to their Pantheon of any fresh aspect of God contributed by a conquered Province.

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